



October 18, 2004

# News Release

## **ICE INTERNATIONAL INVESTIGATION ARRESTS SMUGGLER, FREES KIDNAPPED CHILD**

*Arrests end several month ransom negotiations for 7-year old*

**NEW YORK**—MARTIN FICKE, the Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement ("ICE"), and DAVID N. KELLEY, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced the arrest of TOMASA CAMACHO and RITA GEORGINA SANDOVAL CAMACHO, mother and daughter, on charges of participating in an international kidnapping conspiracy, and the safe return of the seven-year-old child they had allegedly kidnapped.

TOMASA CAMACHO was arrested on October 18, 2004, in New Jersey and was presented late yesterday in Manhattan federal court, where she was ordered detained. RITA GEORGINA SANDOVAL CAMACHO was arrested on October 16, 2004, in the Dominican Republic and is being removed to the United States.

The Complaint, which was filed under seal on September 10, 2004, and unsealed yesterday, charges that, from beginning in approximately November 2003, RITA GEORGINA SANDOVAL CAMACHO and TOMASA CAMACHO and other co-conspirators demanded payment of thousands of dollars in United States currency as a condition of the release of the child, whom they had agreed to smuggle into the United States. The child was safely rescued over the weekend when law enforcement officials in the Dominican Republic, working with ICE, arrested RITA GEORGINA SANDOVAL CAMACHO and found the child in her custody.

The Complaint alleges that in about 2003, the child's parent arranged with a co-conspirator of RITA and TOMASA CAMACHO to smuggle the parent's two children, a son and a daughter, into the United States from Ecuador through Peru, in exchange for approximately \$23,000. In or about November 2003, the parent arranged for the children to travel by bus with their grandparents from their home in Ecuador to Lima, Peru. The parents, living in New York City, hoped to be reunited

with their children, according to the Complaint. In Lima, Peru, other co-conspirators took control of the children, it is charged. From this point, up to and including about May 2004, the parent allegedly made additional payments of approximately \$100 each week to co-conspirators. From about May 2004 up to about September 2004, the parent also allegedly made such periodic payments to RITA GEORGINA SANDOVAL CAMACHO.

After approximately five months, in about February 2004, co-conspirators made arrangements for the daughter to travel from Peru, through Brazil, to John F. Kennedy International Airport in Queens, New York. The co-conspirators advised the parent that the son, who was then six years old, would soon be smuggled into the United States.

On or about May 8, 2004, RITA GEORGINA SANDOVAL CAMACHO and the son allegedly traveled to the Dominican Republic, and then, approximately two weeks later, traveled to Haiti. Thereafter, co-conspirators demanded additional payment for the return of the son, it was charged. For example, in about May 2004, RITA GEORGINA SANDOVAL CAMACHO allegedly told the parent that the son would not be brought to the United States unless the parent paid an additional \$5,000 in United States currency, which the parent paid to RITA GEORGINA SANDOVAL CAMACHO. Then, in about August 2004, RITA GEORGINA SANDOVAL CAMACHO demanded an additional \$10,000 in United States currency, according to the Complaint. Thereafter, in September 2004, ICE agents recorded telephone conversations between the parent and RITA CAMACHO, who was in Haiti, and TOMASA CAMACHO, who was in New Jersey, in which they discussed additional ransom demands, it was charged.

If convicted of the charges contained in the Complaint, the defendants each face a maximum sentence of 5 years' imprisonment.

Mr. KELLEY praised the investigative efforts of ICE and the authorities in the Dominican Republic, who worked with ICE to arrest RITA GEORGINA SANDOVAL CAMACHO and safely rescue the seven-year-old child.

Assistant United States Attorney JESSICA ROTH is in charge of the prosecution.

The charges contained in the Complaint are merely accusations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

# ICE #

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security.*